

Program Area 4: Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP)

I. Introduction and Background

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) is the purchase of environmentally preferable products. Environmentally Preferable Products are usually defined as products and services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared to competing products and services that serve the same purpose. Such products or services may include, but not be limited to, those that contain recycled content, minimize waste, conserve energy or water and reduce the amount of toxics either disposed of or consumed.

The overall goal of EPP is to increase demand and develop markets for products that reduce, minimize, and even eliminate environmental and health impacts associated with the manufacture, use, and/or disposal of such products. In doing so, the intent is to promote increased production of Environmentally Preferable Products, expand their availability, improve their performance, and reduce their cost. In recognition of the enormous purchasing power of all levels of government, equaling approximately 20% of U.S. Gross National Product, governments across the country are now involved in EPP.

II. Environmental and Economic Benefits

Environmentally Preferential Purchasing can reduce the environmental and health impacts associated with products, ranging from conservation of natural resources, to reductions in energy consumption, to elimination of toxic materials such as mercury from the waste stream. These impacts directly and indirectly relate to the quality of life in Colorado. For example, by reducing the purchase of mercury-containing products such as thermostats or thermometers, less mercury ends up in landfills and incinerators, reducing the deposition of mercury in local fish and waterways. By purchasing recycled paper, trees are conserved, and less energy is needed to manufacture new paper, resulting in environmental benefits and reuse of materials.

Implementing EPP can also result in direct economic savings as well as contribute to the local economy. Some products and services actually cost less to purchase than their non-EPP counterparts (e.g. remanufactured toner cartridges), while others cost less to maintain or operate due to lower costs over the product's life (e.g. energy efficient office equipment), while others may reduce costs through avoidance of risk or reduced disposal costs (e.g. costs associated with mercury spills or disposal of mercury containing products). In Colorado, buying recycled products can create markets for materials collected through local recycling programs, thereby reducing the costs of those programs. Local companies that produce and sell Environmentally Preferable Products generate revenue and jobs for the local economy.

State government purchases of Environmentally Preferable Products can result in significant environmental and economic savings, including:

- Energy efficiency;
- Conservation of natural resources;
- Reducing materials sent to landfills;
- Cost savings;
- Local job creation and revenue generation;

III. Existing Environmental Preferable Purchasing Efforts

- The Department of Labor and Employment (DLE) recently completed and began implementing an EPP policy for their department that covers all cleaning products.
- All state agencies are required that 50% of their paper purchases have at least a 30% recycled paper content. (Act 24-103-207)

IV. Environmental Preferable Purchasing Statewide Strategies

The Department of Personnel and Administration should incorporate Environmental Preferable Purchasing into their process to reduce the environmental and health impacts associated with purchasing, reduce costs wherever possible, and increase operational efficiency. As part of such efforts, the Department of Personnel and Administration should:

- Increase the selection of environmentally preferable products on statewide contracts and eliminate non-EPP alternatives wherever feasible and cost-effective.
- Develop language for agencies to use that will help them incorporate EPP specifications into service contracts and grants over \$50,000.
- Designate one person to stay abreast of EPP issues, receive ongoing information, such as the EPP newsletter and disseminate such information to appropriate agency personnel.
- Participate in EPP conferences, other related workshops and training, and appropriate awards and recognition programs.
- Track and report statewide EPP purchases/activities.
- Train agencies and raise awareness of the availability and performance of environmentally preferable products, the environmental and health benefits and cost saving opportunities associated with EPP. Such efforts should include:
 - Development of guides and fact sheets online for purchasing staff to review.
 - Provide online case studies to show effectiveness of products and cost comparisons.
 - Provide assistance to agencies in writing RFP's so they include EPP as an element.

V. Environmental Preferable Purchasing Agency Strategies

To help reach environmentally preferable purchasing goals, agencies should:

- Purchase Environmentally Preferable Products whenever they are equal in performance and cost-effective based on the product's life-cycle cost, which includes the purchase, operating, and disposal costs associated with purchases made through statewide contracts, department agreements, incidental, and credit card purchases.
- Purchase and evaluate new Environmentally Preferable Products periodically and/or participate in Environmentally Preferable Product testing opportunities.
- Identify the most significant purchases made on an annual basis and take steps to ensure that the products contain EPP criteria wherever possible and effective.
- Participate in EPP conferences, other related workshops and training, and appropriate awards and recognition programs.

Action Steps to Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

A variety of short-term actions state agencies can take to reduce their environmental and economic impacts.

- Save money by purchasing EPP products that cost less, including, but not limited to:
 - Remanufactured toner cartridges
 - Remanufactured office panels
 - Retread tires
 - Recycled mulch
 - Recycled antifreeze
 - Recycled plastic traffic cones
- Conserve energy and reduce electricity costs by purchasing energy efficient office equipment, appliances, lighting fixtures, LED exit signs, and other items.
- Purchase durable products that do not have to be replaced often, such as plastic lumber furniture, decking, planters, and other recycled plastic outdoor products. Reduced maintenance and replacement costs over the product's life often offset any additional purchasing costs.
- Reduce potential liability, health risks, and clean-up costs, by purchasing less or not toxic products. Examples include:

- Bio-based lubricants, especially for landscaping equipment near sensitive areas where oil leaks could be substantially damaging (e.g. golf courses, wells, rivers, etc.)
 - Mercury-free thermometers, barometers, thermostats and blood pressure cuffs. Disposal of mercury can run thousands of dollars.
 - Green cleaning chemicals that are less harmful to janitorial staff.
- Consider leasing expensive equipment (e.g. large copiers, computers) to avoid up-front costs, incorporate ongoing maintenance and upgrades, and eliminate disposal costs.
 - Ask all bidders to submit proposals on recycled paper, double sided copies, and without extra materials not requested. This helps to promote recycled paper markets, reduce vendor-mailing costs and minimize agency file storage needs.
 - Use bulk purchasing of EPP's to reduce product costs. For example, recycled copy paper costs decrease when you buy in large quantities.

Maximize the productivity and comfort of staff, visitors and clients by purchasing products that improve indoor air quality. Buy less toxic cleaners, carpeting and paints with low volatile organic compounds and use integrated pest management strategies to minimize pesticide application.